Joseph Smith had planned a Rocky Mountain sanctuary for the Saints, realizing it was the only place where they could be safe from mobs and free to practice their religion. To build a city in a day would require a place completely away from other people or their influence. To have a government of their own would require a separation from United States Control, and a sanctuary in the Rocky Mountains, then Mexican territory would allow such a government. There not even the devil, their enemies of Missouri and Illinois, could dig them out or get to them. Smith knew from stories brought back by explorers that the climate there would be a healthful one, unlike the swamps of the Mississippi Valley, and the longevity of the Latter Day Saints in their mountain home has certainly vindicated his prophesy of living a long, full life there. Later events would reveal that under Brigham Young's leadership the Saints would emigrate to a choice land already seen in vision by Joseph Smith. The move would come sooner than any could expect, for on September 9th, 1845 the church's Council of Fifty resolved that an exploring company should be selected to go to the Great Salt Lake Valley to gather information relative to emigration there.[29]

It had been more than a year since that awful day at Carthage when the raised arm of the fiend Worrell had been for a moment turned to stone as he sought to sever the head of Joseph Smith from his body. Since that time Worrell and Levi Williams had often led the mobs as they whipped, burned, and killed. During those terrible days, Sheriff J.B. Backenstos tried in vain to uphold the law and protect the Saints. Finally the mobs turned on the sheriff and threatened both him and his family with violence. On September 16th, 1845 Sheriff Backenstos began moving his family out of Nauvoo, but he was seen and followed by an armed mob on horseback. The sheriff and his family were racing for their lives when they came upon a band of Mormons using their wagons to haul some neighbor's possessions whose homes had been burned. Among them were Joseph Murdock, Porter Rockwell, and Peter Conover. Sheriff Backenstos called to them for help as one of the riders raced up close behind him. Porter Rockwell knelt to aim his rifle and then fired a single shot. His bullet struck the rider dead center on his belt buckle, and he was knocked from his horse and fell to the ground dead. That rider proved to be Frank Worrell, the man who tried to cut

Benjamin A Norris
Age 7 in Nauvoo = 1847

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29. History of the Church, Pg. 379.

off the Prophet's head after he was murdered at Carthage.[30] The fiend of Carthage prison was dead, and Joseph and those who had witnessed his death couldn't help but think, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord!"

Meanwhile the great Nauvoo temple was completed, and Joseph helped guard it while howling mobs swore to tear it down. Even though their world seemed to be coming apart, Joseph and his family continued to labor in the work of the Lord. On January 25th, 1845 Joseph's brother John Deans Murdock married Mary Jane Norris in the new Nauvoo temple. We know not what, if anything, happened to Jeanette Risell, according to Joseph's journal the girl John Deans married at New York.

But an even stranger mystery was in the making, for John's new wife had a brother in New York State, Benny Norris, then only 7 years old, who came with his parents to Nauvoo to be with his sister. His father, David Norris, was a blacksmith at Nauvoo, and during the fighting there in September, 1846 he was killed while defending the city from the mobs who were burning it. Mrs. Norris died during the exodus from Nauvoo, leaving poor Benny to fend for himself, since his sister and her husband John Deans had already fled the burning city.

Young Benny Norris became just another of the homeless thousands wandering hungry and alone on the frozen prairie. But he knew his sister had moved west, and somehow he set out to find her, and against all odds he succeeded. The story of Benny Norris and his life with the Murdocks was destined to be as strange a tale as any ever heard on the frontier.

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30. Diary of Peter Conover, Utah State Historical Society, and The Carthage Conspiracy, Pg. 195, Dallin Oaks, University of Illinois Press, 1975.

Benny age 7 in Nauvoo